

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 2528

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CLAMP-DOWN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY CONTINUES

1. THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION (MLA), IN ANTICIPATION OF A
DECISION IN THE BHUTTO MURDER TRIAL IN LAHORE, HAS MOVED AGAINST
POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKERS AND SEVERAL RECALCITRANT NEWSPAPERS.
SEVERAL PROMINENT PPP LEADERS, INCLUDING BEGUM BHUTTO, HAVE BEEN
DETAINED, AND SEVERAL HUNDRED PARTY WORKERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED.

2. MRS. BHUTTO'S HOUSE ARREST CAME AFTER SHE CHARGED THAT THE MLA
WAS TRANSFERRING HER HUSBAND'S CASE FROM THE LAHORE HIGH COURT TO
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A MILITARY TRIBUNAL SO A DEATH SENTENCE COULD NOT BE APPEALED. THE
GOVERNMENT QUICKLY DENIED THE CHARGE AND PLACED THE ACTING
CHAIRMAN OF THE PPP UNDER FIFTEEN DAYS' HOUSE ARREST. SHE THUS
JOINS AT LEAST SEVERAL HUNDRED OF HER FELLOW PPP ACTIVISTS WHO HAVE
BEEN DETAINED SINCE THE FIRST OF MARCH AS THE GOVERNMENT MOVES TO
LIMIT THE POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENT REACTION TO THE BHUTTO DECISION.
AMONG THOSE INCARCERATED ARE SEVERAL OF THE PROMINENT NAMES IN THE

PPP INCLUDING FORMER FEDERAL LAW MINISTER S. M. MASUD, FORMER NWFP GOVERNOR NASIM BABAR, AND, ACCORDING TO UNCONFIRMED REPORTS, FORMER ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, TIKKA KHAN. WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED REPORTS THAT AT LEAST SEVERAL HUNDRED PARTY WORKERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN PUNJAB, AND AN EQUAL NUMBER IN THE FRONTIER AND SIND.

3. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO MOVED AGAINST PRESS VIOLATIONS OF MARTIAL LAW RULES. THE EDITOR OF THE PPP DAILY MUSAWAT WAS CHARGED IN LAHORE ON MARCH 13 WITH PUBLISHING, AGAINST MLA INSTRUCTIONS, BEGUM BHUTTO'S STATEMENT NOTED PARA TWO. OFFICIALS OF A SECOND PRO-PPP NEWSPAPER IN RAWALPINDI NOW FACE SIMILAR CHARGES. A THIRD URDU DAILY WAS SUSPENDED FOR 15 DAYS AFTER "PUBLISHING PHOTOGRAPHS WHICH TENDED TO CREATE HATRED OF THE GOVERNMENT."

4. WHILE PREPARATIONS CONTINUE FOR THE MURDER CASE DECISION, A NEW FLURRY OF CHARGES HAS DESCENDED ON THE FORMER PM. ON MARCH 11, A SPECIAL COURT COMMENCED HEARING THREE CASES AGAINST BHUTTO INVOLVING HIS ALLEGED RIGGING OF THE MARCH, 1977 POLLS, NON-DECLARATION OF ASSETS, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE RESIDENCES AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE. A DEFENSE REQUEST FOR A FOUR TO SIX WEEKS ADJOURNMENT WAS GRANTED BECAUSE OF THE PREOCCUPATION OF THE FORMER PM'S LAWYERS WITH THE MURDER CASE. NEWSPAPERS ON MARCH 14 GIVE WIDE COVERAGE TO A STORY THAT THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT HAS TAKEN STEPS TO RECOVER RS. 32 LAKH (\$320 THOUSAND) IN OUTSTANDING CUSTOMS DUTIES PLUS ASSORTED FINES ARISING FROM BHUTTO'S IMPORTATION OF PERSONAL ITEMS IN EXCESS OF THE OFFICIAL ALLOWANCE
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WHICH HE RECEIVED AS PM.
HUMMEL

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